



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on April 16, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 514 Main Street. The presiding officer was Brandt Heckert. Board members present were Karen Dionne, Mark Lombari, Sara Volino, Patrick DeSocio, Christine Lichatz and Kate Dickson. Board members Darcy DaCosta and Spencer Morris were absent. Ex officio member Caroline Wells was absent. Town Solicitor Anthony DeSisto and Attorney Stephanie Federico were present to discuss the sign ordinance. Paula Silva was present to discuss the Art Night banners. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of March 19, 2012

The minutes from the regular meeting held on March 19, 2012 were reviewed by the members via email. Ms. Dickson made a motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Mr. DeSocio and all members were in favor.

2. Presentation of a draft sign ordinance from the Warren Town Solicitor

Mr. DeSisto presented the Board with a draft of the sign ordinance. He noted that he modeled the ordinance after the Barrington sign ordinance because it is a comprehensive sign ordinance; however, he requested that the Board consider it to be only a starting point for policy in Warren. Emphasizing the importance of having the business community involved in crafting a sign ordinance, he asked the Board to send him feedback and suggestions. He also asked the Board to look to the future on other land use regulations that might need changing. Noting that the town is allowed to amend the Comprehensive Plan three times within a year, Mr. DeSisto stated that ordinances and the Comprehensive Plan need to be reviewed and adjusted as times and economic conditions change within the town. He also suggested that there be language in the sign ordinance regarding grandfathering rights. Mr. Heckert requested that the Board send suggestions to Mr. DeSisto and Ms. Federico within the next week to give them time to make the proper revisions.

Mr. DeSisto said that the letter to Town Council regarding revisions to the business registration ordinance could be resubmitted to him directly. He also asked the Board if there is potential for a shared parking program on Water Street; the Board discussed the findings of the parking survey which was submitted to Town Council last year. Mr. DeSisto agreed the priority with parking in Warren should be identification, delineation, and

enforcement. The Board also discussed resident parking passes and parking limits on Water Street. Mr. DeSisto and Ms. Federico left the meeting after this agenda item.

3. Request for EDB assistance to get permission and obtain funding for Art Night banners to be installed in Warren (Paula Silva)

Ms. Silva requested that the EDB support a banner program for the town. The banners would be installed on the town's lamp posts (as opposed to National Grid poles). Currently there are 53 lamp posts in town, and there are plans to add more to Water Street in the future. The recommendation to the town would be for approximately 20-25 banners. Ms. Silva also noted she received permission from the state to install up to nine banners on the bridge between Barrington and Warren. The brackets would belong to the town and various groups, including Art Night, would be able to display banners for a fee to promote local events. The brackets would cost around \$1500. Ms. Silva and the Board discussed funding for the brackets; Ms. Dickson suggested that the administrative fee could possibly cover the cost of the brackets and potentially generate revenue. Ms. Dickson suggested taking a poll of businesses that would be interested in displaying banners. Ms. Dickson agreed to work with Ms. Silva on preparing a proposal for Town Council. The Board agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss this item if necessary.

4. Discussion and action on revision of the Business Friendly Town Hall Memorandum (DaCosta/DeSocio)

Ms. DaCosta was unable to attend the meeting. The Board agreed to postpone the discussion of the Memorandum until the next meeting. The Board briefly discussed the need for improved communication between the town hall and the business community.

5. Discover Warren update to include the walking map project and the Shipshape Challenge

Ms. Dickson updated the Board on Discover Warren. According to Ms. MacDonald the Warren Preservation Society has agreed to pay for half of the walking map; Ms. Dickson discussed possible funding from Newport CPV and Citizens Bank. The cost of the map, including design, should be approximately \$5000 with all costs covered by Discover Warren, the Warren Preservation Society, and potential donations. The Board discussed distribution places for the map.

Ms. Dickson and Mr. DeSocio discussed the plans for the Shipshape Challenge, including the time frame for the contest, prize structure and the judging process, and the possibility of corporate sponsorship. Mr. DeSocio stated the transfer station might be able to extend a free trash disposal day as part of the contest. Caroline Wells should be able to direct grant money towards the project as well. They will also present the project to Town Council and also plan to meet with Senator Felag and Representative Malik to discuss state sponsorship. Mr. DeSocio hopes the project will be newsworthy and generate statewide publicity.

6. Report on continuing business outreach (Dickson/DeSocio)

Ms. Dickson and Mr. DeSocio reported that they have a working list of business owners that they are planning to contact. Thus far they have met with Todd Blount of Blount Seafood and Michael Freidman, owner of the Tourister Mill complex. In the future, they plan to meet with the following businesses/business owners: Ava Anderson, Avtech, Parker Mills, Mojo Software, Water Rower and Dyer Yachts. Other suggestions from the Board included TT Bike Fit, Taylor Box and Fuel Belt. Ms. Dickson and Mr. DeSocio commented that Mr. Freedman thought that business owners and the town need to have a stronger relationship.

7. Report from the Gateway Signage workgroup (Dionne/Lombardi/Volino)

The Board agreed to have the work group continue working on the design and locations for five gateway signs. The work group will have a more detailed report available for the Board at the May meeting. The EDB will make a recommendation to Town Council regarding the signs when a more detailed report on the project is complete.

8. Discussion and action on a request from the Warren Town Planner for EDB members to serve on a planning committee for the Water Street Improvement Project

The Town of Warren received a grant of over \$800,000 to make structural improvements to Water Street. Caroline Wells asked the EDB for members to serve on a planning committee for the project. Ms. Dionne, Ms. Volino, Ms. Dickson and Mrs. Lichatz stated that they would be willing to serve on the planning committee.

9. Announcement of the May 17th joint economic strategy meeting of the Warren Town Council and the EDB

Mr. Heckert announced that there is a joint economic strategy meeting of the Town Council and the EDB scheduled for Thursday, May 17th at 7:00 p.m. All Board members are welcome to attend the meeting.

Ms. Volino made motion was made to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lombardi, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald

Minutes submitted by Kristin MacDonald
May 18, 2012

